

THE CORRESPONDENT.

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT.

No. 13.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 20, 1827.

VOL. 2.

CORRESPONDENCE.

HISTORY OF SAMUEL.

Continued from page 149:

But another difficulty remains unexplained: how could an act so insignificant, so trivial, as that of pouring over the head, of rubbing on the forehead a little oil or grease, have the prodigious effect not only of persuading a simple shepherd that he was seriously called to be king, but also to extend that persuasion to the immense majority of the nation, and even to Saul himself, and his son Jonathan, who makes the formal declaration, ch. 23, v. 17, and ch. 24, v. 21? It must be confessed that this fact, at first sight, appears singular; but when we examine its accessaries and antecedents, it becomes natural and simple, like all the other parts of this history, because it is found to be the effect of an opinion and a prejudice which, for a long time, had prepared the peoples' minds.

It is very true, that before this period no chief of the laity or military had received the ceremony of the unction and rubbing with oil; but the rite, nevertheless, had existed a long while as a public, solemn observance, surrounded by circumstances the best calculated to impose respect, since it was the rite of inauguration of the high priest of God; the act which consecrated the first high priest, Aaron, by the hand of the legislator and founder of religion, Moses. This is what we learn in the 29th chapter of Exodus, where details are given worthy of attention. God there says to Moses, "This is what you shall do to consecrate Aaron and his children to the office of the priesthood: Take a bullock and two rams without spot; unleavened bread, cakes unleavened, moistened with oil, made with flour and meal; place them in a basket; present them with the bullock and rams; bring Aaron near and his children to the door of the tent where the ark is; wash them with water; take away their clothing and clothe Aaron with tunic, with a long robe, &c.; place the mitre on their heads, and the holy diadem upon the mitre; and take the oil of anointing and pour it upon the head of Aaron and rub him with it: also bring near his two sons and clothe them without anointing them; and they shall be consecrated to be my priests forever."

We see here all the pomp and apparel of the ceremony of unction performed in presence of the ark of the god Jehovah, and of the people of Israel; and we perceive how easy it was to transfer the religious respect to the head of a king. If this was a novelty of Samuel's invention, certainly he did not have the credit of inaugurating that character. If it had been a novelty invented even by Moses, we may be assured that it did not

produce the effect that he desired. But, brought up among the Egyptians, and in the practice of borrowing from them the greater part if not all his ideas and ceremonies, he evidently derived this also from the same source. Be this, however, as it may, what could have been the motive, what idea conducted its first inventor or inventors to contrive a practice so singular? It may have been useful among the society in which it was practised—among nations half savage, beginning to enter into regular society. I can figure to myself a people of Upper Egypt, naked, or nearly so, from the nature of the climate, wishing to impress upon some one a particular sign of command, or of some public functions. How would they establish that sign? Should it be a staff, a cap of stuff or feathers, a small club sceptre, or a band on the forehead? All these objects, moveable and fragile, might be seized by the violence of the first invader; the man would be no longer any thing. They would have remarked that certain liquids, such as fat and oil, adhered and were fixed to the skin in a tenacious manner, difficult to efface; water would not do it, and dust rendered the mark more visible. They would find this mark suitable to their purpose; the effect of the common dust would give them the idea of that which was colored; they would have the red corail, minium cinabar, yellow ochres, green copper, the blue of certain shell, fish, and vegetables. The colored mark which would thus result would become, among these people, a sign of utility and beauty. Hence we find it, at all times and in all countries, among all nations, even among those the most polished.

This sign is striking among the Indians, where it bears a religious character, since the adorers of the three gods distinguish one another by the color and form of the marks on the forehead. It is found in all the isles of the Indian and Pacific oceans; we see it among our American savages, as well as among their brethren, the Tartars of Asia, and among most of the blacks of Africa. To render it more permanent, the art is perfected by causing the color to penetrate the skin, by pricking with fine points of fish bones, or metallic needles, which constitutes the art of tattooing, rendered celebrated by the accounts of modern travellers. Thus, in its origin and object, the ceremony of sacerdotal and royal unction, to which the people and the Jewish worship attach so high and mysterious importance, was nothing more than the tattooing of an individual, in order to render him indelibly recognisable.

But, to close the history of Samuel, I would explain why he was so determined in destroying king Saul, to give him a rival, and a successor, who could not be considered but as a usurper. I admit, as a primary motive, the resentment of the priest against the interference of Saul in the functions of the sacrificer and divine. But this motive alone does not seem to be sufficient. There must have been some other cause more radical, and I find it in the physical infirmity of Saul, which was epilepsy. The Hebrew text authorizes this idea. Such a complaint, joined to that of an evil spirit for the cause, must have rendered Saul very unpopular. He must, also, have fallen in public estimation, as much by the violent paroxysms of anger, to which he was more and more subject, as by the mediocrity of his means, both moral and political. Samuel, who

had made the erroneous choice of such a chief, could not forgive his own mistake; and it was to correct this that he invented the pretext which we have seen. Besides, in the final execution of his design, he introduced an arrangement worthy of remark: he did not choose an aged man, capable of being an immediate competitor; he took a young man, 20 or 24 years old, who, the opposite of Saul, then aged about 55, would leave that king time to finish his course.

We see the conduct of Samuel explained throughout by natural causes, founded on the manners and prejudices of his nation; we find probable motives for all his actions; in his personal character always the same, always calculating, artful, hypocritical, ambitious of power, beating up against the difficulties of his position with as much art as circumstances would allow. An examination of the text will show how transparent is the veil of prodigies and wonders which enveloped him; that those miracles existed nowhere but in the visionary brain of an ignorant people; and we cannot but be astonished at the blind infatuation which pretends to sustain, even at this day, such savage errors. But the world, which at each generation becomes childish, is always governed by old habits. Each one finds his account in them. Some discover in the illusions a plot to manage, and they manage it after the fashion of Samuel and his brethren. Others find food and authority requiring belief, which seems one of the attributes of human nature. Such is the mechanism of that nature, that when, in our infancy, our nerves have received certain impressions, and have been bent to certain habits, our whole life after, even the sounds and words which are connected with it, have the magic power to revive and resuscitate in us the same movements, and the same dispositions. We have been filled from our cradle with these Bible stories; the names of its personages have been connected with certain opinions and ideas; and thus those judgments which are infused into us are incorporated with us, and act mechanically all our lives: I have often thought, and have even experienced it, that if, at an advanced age, we were presented with the same accounts, disguised with other names, and as coming from China or India, we should decide very differently respecting them. Here is the solution of the problem which often puzzles society, and consists in finding, in persons otherwise well constituted, a sane and right judgment on all things which they have learnt of themselves, but constantly false where they have been taught by others in their youth. In the first case, their mind or intellectual principle has operated for itself; it consequently has sensation and judgment. In the second case, it is but a machine for repetition, a discordant clock, the work of which does not chime with the dial governed by the sun. Thus we see often in old age the impressions of infancy reappear, which had slept during mature life. During the latter period, our reason, always on the stretch, repels with disdain lonely meditations and returning recollections. In old age, our nerves fall back into a state of vegetation, purely animal, taking up the terrors of infancy.

To be continued.

A FUTURE STATE.

Continued from page 181.

The polypus furnishes an analogy equally unreal. The vitality of the several parts is never destroyed: and there having been no death, there is no resurrection. Immerse a polypus in boiling water until vitality is extinct; then cut him in pieces and see if each or either piece will produce a perfect polypus. And if they would, and if your polypus, when thus prepared, is capable of being subdivided a hundred times, at each time reproducing a perfect polypus, are all these polypii which you have thus produced the identical polypus with which you commenced the operation? If they are, here is not only the long contested doctrine of trinity in unity, (so often demonstrated to be a mathematical absurdity,) but the far more wonderful doctrine or fact of unity in unity, demonstrated to your hands. But the truth is, the identity, in all but one, at most, of these polypii, is lost; which makes an end of the argument. It is a mere mode of multiplying and continuing the species; not an example of either the immortality or the resurrection of the individual. In brief, it no more proves, or conduces to prove, man's future existence, than the cutting the twigs of a willow tree into ten thousand slips, and letting each, when placed in a suitable soil, grow till it became a tree as big as its parent, would prove that each of these ten thousand willows was the identical parent tree.

The last pretended analogy is the well known revivification of flies, and some other animals, after they have been long apparently dead. We know that men sleep, and, while sleeping, lose consciousness—the only proof an individual can have of his own existence—and after a few hours, or, perhaps, a few moments, awake again and resume the consciousness they have lost. But he would, we apprehend, be more bold than wise who, on this foundation, would undertake to build a serious argument in favor of man's future existence. The bear, the dormouse, and some other animals, sleep for months, and then awake; but who, from this, ever argued the immortality of the soul? Cold blooded animals, we know, may, under certain circumstances, have the vital functions almost indefinitely suspended, and again restored: but we believe no one even of these animals was ever seriously suspected of being immortal. Snakes and fish, of certain species, may be thoroughly and perfectly frozen, and, in a more genial temperature, may be revivified: but as long as man cannot, why attempt any analogical inference from the fact? The truth is, with regard to all animals, and man among others, that animation, or, in other words, the vital functions, may be suspended in a variety of ways without being destroyed. Instead, therefore, of hunting after analogies among insects, we had better draw our inferences respecting man from man. Animation becomes suspended in a human being from electricity, from suffocation, from concussion, from fright, or from some other source. Means are applied and animation is restored, or, in other words, action is restored to the vital functions. All this is perfectly familiar; and there are, probably, few who have not known instances. But have the individuals thus, from time to time, resuscitated, been thenceforth visibly im-

mortal? We apprehend not. We apprehend that, sooner or later, the common and, as we believe, inevitable lot of their race has been or must be theirs; to die, and to have the particles which once composed their bodies disposed, either wholly or in part, into new combinations, where their identity can no longer be traced.

These boasted analogies, then, like all the other arguments we have noticed, are utterly insufficient to establish the fact, or even the rational probability, of man's future existence. What, then, (keeping in view the wholesome principle, that our belief should be according to evidence,) ought to be our belief in this matter? We have evidence—the evidence of our senses, the concurring testimony of all tradition, of all history, and of all human experience, that man dies: the evidence is universal, unvarying, full, convincing, overwhelming. Is there any similar proof that man will live again? There is none. Visit the catacombs of Africa, the tombs of Asia, the cemeteries of Europe, and the burrows of America: they tell you but one tale, and that tale is, “dust to dust.” The bones of those who were deposited in the “dark and narrow house” three thousand years ago still remain, unmoved and inanimate, in the niche, the urn, or the mould which first received them. If they have not revived in three thousand years, will they in three hundred thousand? America has been peopled by civilized man for more than two centuries; during which time some millions, of their own and of the aboriginal race, have died. Has any single individual of them ever been known to rise from the dead? No. Have we any rational proof for believing, or ground for supposing, that, since creation, any one individual of the human race has ever risen from death to a life of immortality? No. It is plain, then, that, whether on the score of experience, of evidence, or of argument, there is no proof for the dogma of a future existence.

Having arrived at this result, we may safely pause until some proof is offered before we assent to a creed which violates probability, contradicts experience, and is unsupported by reason. But, at some convenient season, we may probably perform a work of supererogation, by suggesting a few arguments and considerations tending to place the fallacy and absurdity of this fascinating (because flattering) creed in a still stronger light; and we are much mistaken if we do not then also show, that it is a creed not merely unfounded, but absolutely injurious to the human race.

II.

THE QUESTIONS OF ZAPATA.

From the French of Voltaire.

Continued from page 169.

17. Can I, without assistance, determine whether the three angels, to whom Sarah served up an entire calf for dinner, had tangible bodies, or whether they only borrowed the forms they appeared in? and how it could happen that the two angels God sent to Sodom should excite in the Sodomites certain abominable inclinations? These heavenly messengers must have been extremely pretty! But wherefore did Lot, entitled the just, offer his two daughters to the Sodomites in the room of the two angels? Ah,

the baggages! they went to bed now and then, it seems, to their father. My learned masters, you must allow that this was not quite decent.

18. Will my hearers believe me when I inform them that Lot's wife was changed into a statue of salt? What reply shall I make, should they tell me that this story is most likely nothing but a gross imitation of the ancient fable of Euodia, and that such a statue would dissolve in the rain?

19. What shall I urge in justification of the benedictions that fell on Jacob the Just, who deceived his father Isaac, and who robbed Laban, his father in law? When I relate that God appeared to Jacob at the top of an immense ladder, and that Jacob fought one whole night with an angel, what shall I add by way of explanation?

20. What must I say upon the subject of the Jews' sojourn in Egypt, and of their escape from thence? In Exodus we are informed that they remained four hundred years in Egypt; but in making a just calculation we only find it to be two hundred and five. How came Pharoah's daughter to bathe in the Nile, where it appears no one ever bathes on account of the crocodiles?

21. Moses having espoused the daughter of an idolater, why did not God, when he selected him for his prophet, reproach him on this account? How was it that Pharoah's magicians performed the same miracles as Moses did, with only the exception of covering the country with lice and other vermin? How could they turn all the waters into blood, since Moses had already caused them to undergo this transformation? Wherefore did Moses, conducted as he was by the Almighty, and placed at the head of six hundred and thirty thousand combatants, take to flight with his people, instead of possessing himself of Egypt, wherein all the firstborn had been destroyed by God himself? From the time that Egypt was first noticed in real history, it never was capable of assembling an army of one hundred thousand men. Why did Moses, in flying with his troops from the land of Gessen, instead of going in a straight forward direction to Canaan, traverse the half of Egypt; and then retrace his path to Pihahiroth, a spot situated over against Memphis, between Baalzephon and the Red Sea? In fine, how could Pharoah follow him with all his cavalry, since it is declared, in the fifth plague of Egypt, that God caused all the cattle to perish? Besides, Egypt being intersected by so many canals, never had but a very small body of cavalry.

22. How am I to reconcile what is said in Exodus with St. Stephen's discourse in the Acts of the Apostles, and with the passages in Jeremiah and in Amos? In Exodus we are told that the Jews sacrificed to Jehovah in the desert during forty years; Jeremiah, Amos, and St. Stephen, say, that neither sacrifice nor victims were offered during all the above time. According to Exodus they constructed the tabernacle in which was deposited the ark of the covenant; and according to St. Stephen in the Acts, they bore about with them the tabernacles of Moloch and of Remphan.

23. I am not a sufficiently good chemist to extricate myself happily in respect to the affair of the golden calf, which we are told in Exodus was formed in one single day, and reduced by Moses into ashes. Are these to be considered as two miracles, or are they two things possible for human art to accomplish?

24. Is it, also, to be considered as a miracle, that the conductor of a nation, in the midst of a desert, could cause the throats of twenty-three thousand men belonging to this nation to be cut, by one single tribe out of twelve; and that twenty-three thousand men permitted themselves to be massacred without making any defence?

25. Ought I, also, to regard as a miracle, or as an ordinary act of justice, that twenty-four thousand Hebrews should be put to death, because one among them had lain with an Midianitish woman, whilst Moses himself had married a Midianite? And were not these Hebrews, whom they represent to us as being so ferocious, a somewhat civil sort of folks, to suffer their throats thus to be cut for the sake of the wenches?

26. What explication shall I give to that law which prohibits the eating of the hare, *because it chews the cud, and is not cloven footed*, whilst, in fact, hares have cloven feet, and do not ruminate? We have already seen that this excellent book has made God a bad geographer—a bad chronologist—a bad natural philosopher; and it does not make him a better naturalist. What reasons shall I give in favor of several other laws not a whit less sage; such as that of the waters of jealousy, and of the punishment of death against any man who should lay with his wife at the time of her monthly indisposition? Shall I be able to justify these barbarous and ridiculous laws, which, it is said, emanated from God himself.

27. What must I say to convince those who may seem astonished that a miracle should be necessary in order to pass the Jordan; a river which in its widest part measures only forty-five feet, a space which the smallest raft would enable one to clear; a river which was fordable in so many places, as witness the forty-two thousand Ephraimites murdered at one of the fords of this river by their brethren?

28. What answer am I to make to those who may ask how it happened that the walls of Jerico fell at the sound of the rams' horns? And why the other cities were not made to fall in the same way?

29. What excuse shall I make for the courtesan Rahab, in respect to the deed by which she betrayed her country? Wherefore was this treason necessary, since the mere sound of the rams' horns would have been quite sufficient to take the town? And how shall I fathom the depth of the divine decrees, which have ordained that our Divine Saviour Jesus Christ should have his origin deduced from this courtesan, *Rahab*, as well as from the incest that *Thamer* committed with *Judah*, her father in law, and the adultery of *David* and *Bathsheba*? So much the ways of God are incomprehensible?

30. Must I, or must I not, give my approbation to Joshua, who hung up thirty-one petit kings, and usurped their estates; that is to say, their villages?

31. How shall I speak of the battle which Joshua fought against the Amorrheens at Bethron, on the road to Gabaan? The Lord caused it to rain down from heaven immense stones, all the way from Bethron to Aseca; there is a distance of five leagues from Bethron to Aseca; thus the Amorrheens were exterminated by rocks which tumbled down from the sky during their march of five leagues. The scriptures inform us, that this event took place at noon; wherefore, then, did Joshua command the sun and the moon to stand still in the middle of the firmament, in order

to have sufficient time to finish the destruction of a little troop which had been, it seems, already exterminated? For what reason did he command the moon to stop at midday? Could the sun and moon, then, remain stationary for a whole day? What commentator shall I have recourse to in order to explain this extraordinary fact?

32. What apology shall I make for Jephtha, who immolated his own daughter, and caused the throats to be cut of forty-two thousand Jews of the tribe of Ephraim, who could not pronounce the word *Shiboleth*?

To be continued.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1827.

LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION.

On the Inconsistencies, Absurdities, and Contradictions of the Bible. By the Secretary.

LECTURE SEVENTH.

Continued from page 188.

IN the first ages of the church, the opponents of Christianity, among other objections which they brought against it, asserted that it was not a *new* religion, but a mere transcript of oriental mythology, of which its founders, who were Jews, had acquired some knowledge when captives among the Assyrians. Tertullian, in his "Apology for the Christians," so far from denying this, seems to admit the truth of the accusation. "Many (says this writer, c. 16) suppose, with great probability, that the Sun is our God, and they refer us to the religion of the Persians." A more modern writer, sir William Jones, in support of whose veracity we have the testimony of nearly the whole Christian world, informs us that the Sanscrit Dictionary of the Hindoos, compiled more than 2000 years ago, contains the whole story of the incarnate deity, born of a virgin, and miraculously escaping in his infancy from the reigning tyrant of his country, who "sought the young child's life," and put to death all the children of the place of his nativity, "from two years old, and under," in the hope of destroying the infant god. In the same work we have the accounts of his miracles, his preachings, and his actions, even to the minuteness of his washing the feet of his disciples.

It will readily be perceived, that the whole tendency of this investigation is to render doubtful, if not to destroy, all belief in the existence of the person called Jesus Christ. When I began to reflect on this subject, about thirty years ago, I can well remember that the first doubts which arose in my mind respecting it were obviated by the perusal of a passage in Josephus, in which that writer, as I then believed, expressed himself in such a way as to convince the most incredulous that the promised Messiah had actually appeared on the earth. The passage is as follows: "About that time appeared Jesus, a wise man, if, indeed, it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a performer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure; and he led many Jews, and many even of the Greeks. *This was the Christ.* And when Pontius Pilate, and the great men among us, had punished him on the cross,

those at least who from the first loved him did not cease, for he appeared to them the third day again alive; the holy prophets having spoken these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the stock of Christians named from him still exists."

It was not long, however, before I inquired how Josephus, being a Jew, believing the prophecies, and well acquainted with the prevailing opinions among his countrymen, as to the princely descent and appearance of the Messiah; his coming as a mighty conqueror, who would "put all the enemies of the Jews under his feet;" "of whose kingdom there was to be no end;" who was to "purge Israel from all iniquity," and to establish universal peace and felicity on earth—How, I say, a historian so renowned as Josephus could assert that an obscure individual, the offspring of poor parents, and who had been put to death by the very people he had come to purify, was "the Christ," the deliverer of his nation from the Roman yoke—these difficulties staggered and confounded me. Besides, it appeared to me, that if Josephus had really said what he is alleged to have stated respecting this personage, he could not have been otherwise than a Christian. I anxiously turned over the other parts of the books of Josephus, in the hope of finding some passage to corroborate this one; but the search was in vain. Not another sentence could I find, in which the name of Jesus of Nazareth, or of Christ, was even mentioned. On following up the inquiry, I was soon convinced that the passage had been interpolated, and was one of those pious frauds to which the priests of all religions have resorted, to impose on the credulous. Several of the early fathers of the Christian church, who frequently refer to Josephus, are entirely silent as to this pretended admission of the existence of Jesus; and it has been clearly shown by Blondell, Leclerc, Lardner, Gibbon, Warburton, and a number of other writers, that no such passage is contained in the early copies of the works of Josephus.

Determined, if possible, to get at the truth, my attention was next drawn to the works of Tacitus, who, it is pretended, has spoken of Jesus, and of the religion which he founded, in so positive a manner as to defy all cavil as to his existence. The passage referred to is this: "Therefore, to extinguish the rumor, Nero subdued the accused, and put to the most exquisite punishments those who, being hateful for their crimes, were by the common people called Christians. Christ, the author of that name, had, by the procurator Pontius Pilate, been capitally punished in the reign of Tiberius; and the fatal superstition, for a while suppressed, again broke out, not only through Judea, the origin of that evil, but in the city itself, whither all things that are atrocious or shameful flow together and become famous.

Against the genuineness of this passage two objections occur. First, it is not noticed by Tertullian, in his "Apology for the Christians." This primitive father (as appears from the 5th chapter of his work) ransacked all the early writers for facts which had the appearance of recognising the origin of Christianity; but, although he quotes Tacitus by name regarding the Jews, he makes no mention of what this historian is alleged to have said as to the "fatal superstition," or of Christ, the author of it. Secondly, it was not until the 16th century that this famous passage was

heard of; and even then it was acknowledged that the copies of the Roman history containing it were taken from a single manuscript, written so late, according to Ernesti, as the 10th or 11th century. This solitary copy was brought from a monastery of monks in Westphalia, and presented to pope Leo X., who immediately gave it his sanction. Of the integrity of this successor of St. Peter, we have a noted specimen in his declaration to the clergy, that "the *fable* of Jesus Christ brought grist to their mill, and it was but fair play to keep up that that kept up them." Would a man of such sentiments, and whose station gave him unbounded influence, hesitate about the means employed, when the object contemplated was his own aggrandizement? It is well known that hundreds of books were forged by the early Christian bishops and priests, who had every inducement to support a system so defective as that of Christianity; and which they had every facility of doing, as printing was not then invented, and the clergy claimed the exclusive right of being the depositaries and the expounders of the archives of the church.

The only remaining document, by which it has been attempted to prove the existence of Jesus, is a letter of Pliny, in which that learned man speaks of Christianity as "a vile and excessive superstition;" the professors of which were so abandoned and wicked, that they had no reliance on each other; and when they met to sing hymns to Christ as to a god, it was necessary to swear that there should be no throat cutting, adultery, nor theft, till the ceremony was over. This document is admitted to be genuine. But (as Lardner has shown) it was not written till the year 107, a period so distant from that in which Jesus is said to have lived, that it proves nothing as to that fact.

Here, then, we are left without any evidence of the existence of the supposed founder of Christianity but what arises from writings fabricated by those who had a deep interest in giving currency to the legend. Like the Mitras of the Persians, the Christna of the Hindoos, and the Moses of the Jews, the Jesus of the Christians was originated when men's minds were enveloped in midnight darkness, and before science had shed a ray of light on benighted mortals. The votaries of all religions—holding out their Zendavestas, their Shasters, their Targums, their Korans, and their Bibles—exultingly tell us that these writings contain a clear and explicit revelation of the divine will, and were sent from heaven for the purpose of illuminating and guiding man. But can books, the contents of which exhibit nothing but palpable contradictions, destructive of the credit of each other, have any pretensions to this high authority? Can such writings be called the will of an infinitely wise and omnipotent God? Had they been dictated by such a being, would they not have been worthy of himself—without fault, and free from all imperfections? Would they not have contained every instruction necessary for mankind, and all knowledge useful to them in the utmost perfection, without requiring a host of magi, of brahmins, of muftis, and of priests, to explain their meaning? Would not the revealed will of Deity have been as much superior to all human writing as the sun is superior to a candle? But these writings display no such superiority. They bear indelible marks of a rude age and ignorant authors; they are evidently a collection of the writings of a very barbarous and superstitious people; and, instead of surpassing

every human composition, they are greatly inferior to many of them in every kind of useful information and instruction.

"If revelation (observes an able writer) be as liable to be misunderstood as arguments drawn from reason, it is a no surer guide to mankind. If it needs reason's assistance to explain it, it is weaker. If it do not open our understandings, so as to make us agree more clearly, and on better grounds, it is not a greater light. If it confound reason, it can never produce rational conviction. If it have not plainly the advantage of reason when compared with that alone, it is not superior to reason; or if reason have the advantage of revelation when compared, revelation is inferior to reason. If we can know nothing truly by revelation without reason, revelation is not a true light. Revelation must be entirely true, perfectly plain, and easy to be understood—intrinsically pure, just, consistent, and harmonious—its precepts and doctrines must all tend to make men wiser, better, and happier. Without these qualifications, it wants the proofs of a divine original; it seems to be given in vain, and cannot be the revelation of perfect wisdom. Men of sense, devoid of prejudices of education, will conclude it to be no extraordinary light; and that no more is necessary to direct the faith and practice of mankind, than adhering, in judgment, to reason only—freed from all enthusiasm and imposture; and, in practice, to virtue alone—freed from all superstition."

Progress of Liberal Opinions.—We are almost every day receiving the most flattering accounts of the diffusion of liberal principles throughout the United States. Notwithstanding the measures adopted by the priesthood to prevent the establishment of this paper, and to arrest the progress of the *Free Press Association*, there is no one, who is not determined to shut his eyes against the light, but must acknowledge that the success of both has been unprecedented. It has, in fact, exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the friends of truth. Although great pains are taking to represent those who attend the lectures of the Association in the most contemptible light, we question if any religious assembly in this, or in any other country, is composed of individuals whose characters stand higher, or whose general deportment is more correct; while we challenge the most devout worshipper in any sect to adduce an instance where greater order and decorum are observed at their general meetings. One effect of this has been to attract audiences so numerous, that, although the Association has been organized little more than eight months, it has been found necessary to remove to a larger place of meeting no less than *three* times; and such is the progress of this increase, that not more than one half of those who are desirous of being admitted can at present be accommodated. The door of the Hall is surrounded long before the hour of commencement, and it is with difficulty that even the ladies can obtain a seat.

These facts speak volumes. But, highly pleasing as they must be to all liberal minds, it cannot fail to increase their satisfaction when they know that New York is not the only place in this country where a union has been formed for the purpose of promulgating rational principles by the establishment of public lectures. We have before noticed the forma-

tion of a society at Paterson, N. J., called the "Paterson Free Reading Society;" which, although it originally contemplated objects similar to those of the New York Association, has confined itself, till lately, to creating a library of scientific and philosophical works of established character. Now, however, that they are daily receiving an accession of numbers, and fully alive to the necessity of rendering men wiser, in order to make them better and happier, they have commenced regular and public lectures on Sunday, similar to those delivered at the Free Press Association of this city. Aware of the restraint which fanaticism has imposed on the press, we were, a few days ago, agreeably surprised to receive a number of a paper published at Paterson, entitled the "*Chronicle*," containing the Address of the "Free Reading Society," in which the fact we have just mentioned is announced, and a concise view given of the objects and principles of that Association.

Other similar institutions are now forming in different parts of the country, of which we are in possession of some particulars; but these we must postpone till our next. Meanwhile, we publish the Address of the Paterson Society, as a document that cannot fail to be interesting to our readers, and as containing a correct exposition of the principles that are advocated by the friends of truth.

PATERSON FREE READING SOCIETY.

As the "Paterson Free Reading Society" intend to meet, in future, on the first day of every week, for the purposes originally contemplated by its formation, it may not be improper, on this occasion, to give some explanation of its views, objects, and principles.

Some may think it singular, that we call ourselves, in this country of universal freedom, a "Free Reading Society." The fact, however, is, although we may read what works we please, we cannot always obtain such works as please us. Our libraries contain but few scientific and philosophical works of established character; and so great is the influence of fanaticism, that every publication which is supposed to militate against religion, however useful, is proscribed, or consigned to the flames, by its narrow minded votaries; while society is inundated with tracts, and other devotional productions, calculated to mystify and debase the mind. To remedy this evil, has been one of the principle objects of our union. Already we are in possession of several valuable works which were beyond the reach of individuals; and, as our means increase, others will be added to the number. Another primary object of this institution is the establishment of regular and public lectures on every subject conducive to the happiness of man. Although the errors of theology, that source of all the misery with which humanity is afflicted, will be the principal object of our animadversions, science and general literature will occupy a considerable share of our attention. Aware that "knowledge is power," and that tyranny of every description exists only where ignorance predominates, it is our determined purpose to make every effort to diffuse liberal principles, and thus emancipate the human mind from mental slavery; for although in this country we justly boast of possessing more political liberty than any other people on the earth, it is a melancholy and undeniable fact, that superstition has erected an empire

here more extended and fatal than in those countries where religion is established, and protected by civil power.

The education of children, agreeably to the most approved and most rational systems, is also intended to be effected by this Association. In New York, a school of practical education has been established, where the pupils are taught, on moderate terms, knowledge of every kind; not mere sounds and signs, called words, but by presenting to them, as far as practicable, the objects themselves; by accustoming them to observe and to think, in tracing the analogy and difference between realities; to acquire the habit of analysing and arranging every thing on sight; and, by cultivating their judgment, render them less liable to be duped by the designing, and necessarily to improve their memory. In this institution, the utmost care is taken to form the temper and moral character of the children, and to render them industrious and useful, by making them practically acquainted with agriculture, mechanics, manufactures, commerce, and domestic and political economy. It is our intention to introduce a similar mode of instruction, whenever our funds will justify the attempt. Meanwhile, we shall do all in our power, to form the minds of our offspring on those principles which we consider best adapted to make them useful members of society, and to promote their own happiness.

In endeavoring to accomplish these important objects, we have laid it down as an invariable rule never to employ invective against those who may differ from us in opinion. Ours is not an Association that professes to speak peace, while it employs the dagger. Satisfied that we have truth on our side, we require no other auxiliary but the faculty of reason, which all enjoy, and are capable of exercising. We are more desirous of rearing a fabric possessing in itself attractions sufficiently powerful to engage attention, than in entering the arena of disputation; fully persuaded that the only force requisite to dissipate error is the force of truth, and that the only way to accomplish this is by a united persevering effort to render the knowledge of truth universal.

The advantages to be derived from becoming a member of this society must be obvious to every person who is at all acquainted with the measures pursued by the enemies of truth to prevent a disclosure of the unprincipled means by which they continue to injure, and, frequently, to ruin, its most strenuous champions. Unable to carry their base designs into effect by unjust and arbitrary laws, and sufficiently aware that their dogmas cannot stand the test of argument, they resort to secret means to destroy their opponents. They use the influence which they have obtained in families, to sow the seeds of detraction, and, assassin like, to strike the dagger into the heart of their victim at the very moment when they know he has not the power or the means of defending himself. But, once a member of this Association, he will have the power as well as the means of counteracting these machinations. United with those possessing moral courage like himself, and confident in the justice of his cause, he will fearlessly advocate the truth, in spite of all opposition, and with the certainty that it must ultimately prevail over superstition, fraud, and priestcraft.

Sunday.—We rejoice to find that the law of this state *compelling* the observance of the Sabbath, or Sunday, has been repealed. It was arbi-

trary, unjust, and unconstitutional. As a *civil* regulation, we consider a day of relaxation from labor or business as highly expedient; but whenever the observance of that day is made an engine, as it has hitherto been, in the hands of an arrogant priesthood to control the human mind, it becomes injurious to society. We have good reasons for believing that the salutary repeal of the obnoxious law was effected by a pamphlet entitled "*The People's Rights Reclaimed*," from the pen of one of our most respectable and intelligent citizens; in which the unconstitutionality of the law is demonstrated beyond even the possibility of cavil. Faticism, as is usual in all cases where a beneficial reform is introduced, has opened the floodgates of abuse against the revisers of the law, for recommending the alteration. But let them rail on. The time is past when the anathemas of churchmen intimidated legislators. A ray of light has burst forth too refulgent to be extinguished, or even impeded, by the efforts of bigots. When the mind is bent on acquiring knowledge, nothing can restrain its energies. It never can stop until all its inquiries are satisfied; nor is it possible for it to retrograde. We live in too enlightened an age to fear either the denunciations or the influence of a hireling and corrupt priesthood.

Joint Stock Book Company.—It has been suggested by those friendly to the establishment of this association, that, instead of publishing a prospectus of the plan, a meeting should be called, and a committee at once appointed, to form the necessary rules and regulations. All, therefore, who feel disposed to become subscribers, are requested, *as early as possible*, to signify their intention to the editor of the *Correspondent*, that means may be taken to carry the plan into effect. The great object contemplated is, the obtaining at the *original cost* such books as have been written with a view to human improvement, and that cannot be obtained but at a price beyond the means of individuals. As the company can proceed with a sum of money equal to the printing of an edition of a single book, and advantageously use any sum that can be accumulated, it is not necessary to fix on any capital. It is proposed to make the shares ten dollars each.

Defaulters.—We are almost ashamed to state, that a great proportion of our subscribers are in arrear of the current half year's subscription for our paper. They cannot but be aware, that the existence of the *Correspondent* depends entirely on the *prompt* aid of the friends of liberal principles, and that, where this is withheld, it bespeaks a lukewarmness in the cause utterly unworthy of its adherents. No professions of support can be considered sincere unless followed by corresponding actions; and it cannot be expected of us to continue furnishing our paper, when those who receive it do not comply with the conditions on which it is published.

Morning Lecture.—The Secretary of the *Free Press Association* will deliver a Lecture on Sunday the 21st instant in the Military Hall, Sixth Avenue, Greenwich, at 10 o'clock A. M. The Lecture in the Temple of Arts, William street, at half past 2 o'clock, as usual.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Origin of Fables.—Is it not very natural, that all the various metamorphoses with which the earth may be said to be covered, should have led the orientals, whose imagination is so luxuriant, to imagine that our souls passed from one body to another? An almost imperceptible point grows to be a worm, and this worm becomes a butterfly; an acorn changes to an oak, an egg to a bird; water becomes clouds and thunder; wood is turned into fire and ashes: in a word, all Nature is more or less metamorphosis. Souls being accounted tenous forms, were soon concluded to partake of that property, which was sensibly seen in more dense and heavy bodies. The metempsychosis is, perhaps, the most ancient doctrine in the known world, and still prevails in a great part of India and China. It is likewise very natural that those ancient fables collected and embellished by Ovid, in his admirable work, took their rise from the several metamorphoses with which our eyes are conversant. The very Jews have not been without their metamorphoses. If Niobe was changed into marble, Hedith, Lot's wife, was turned into salt. As Eurydice was detained in hell for looking back, a like indiscretion cost Lot's wife her human nature. The country town in Phrygia, where lived the hospitable Baucis and Philemon, is changed into a lake; the same submersion has befallen Sodom. Arius's daughters turned water into oil; the scripture mentions a change something similar. Cadmus was turned into a serpent, and the like was seen in Aaron's rod. The pagan deities very often assumed a human disguise; and when angels appeared to the Jews, it was always as men; with Abraham they partook of a repast. St. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, says that the messenger of Satan cuffed him.

Church.—There are various kinds of churches; for instance, the Greek church, the protestant church, the church of Geneva, and the Lutheran church. Figuratively it implies that mixed multitude of bishops, deans, canons, prebendaries, and priests, who, under the protection of the state, fare sumptuously of the good things of this world, and expatiate to others on the joys of the next. *Church*, in a corporeal sense, is a large stone or brick building, usually in the form of a cross, with a steeple and weathercock, where poor people and others assemble weekly to receive spiritual instruction.

The church was throughout Europe, in former times, the scene of the most striking events, and the mart of all the passions: there, misery took refuge, and crime found asylum; there, vengeance raised her dagger even at the altar's steps, and love spread its wiles amidst shrines and crucifixes. It was in the church of Canterbury that Thomas a Becket was murdered: it was in the church of Boun Convento that the emperor Henry VII. was poisoned in the *Eucharist*: it was in the Duomo of Florence that the Pazzi, urged by the public and private wrongs, aimed at the lives of the two Medici, and destroyed the feeblest: it was in the church of St. Clair, at Avignon, that Petrarch first fell a victim to Laura's charms, and

tion of a society at Paterson, N. J., called the "Paterson Free Reading Society;" which, although it originally contemplated objects similar to those of the New York Association, has confined itself, till lately, to creating a library of scientific and philosophical works of established character. Now, however, that they are daily receiving an accession of numbers, and fully alive to the necessity of rendering men wiser, in order to make them better and happier, they have commenced regular and public lectures on Sunday, similar to those delivered at the Free Press Association of this city. Aware of the restraint which fanaticism has imposed on the press, we were, a few days ago, agreeably surprised to receive a number of a paper published at Paterson, entitled the "*Chronicle*," containing the Address of the "Free Reading Society," in which the fact we have just mentioned is announced, and a concise view given of the objects and principles of that Association.

Other similar institutions are now forming in different parts of the country, of which we are in possession of some particulars; but these we must postpone till our next. Meanwhile, we publish the Address of the Paterson Society, as a document that cannot fail to be interesting to our readers, and as containing a correct exposition of the principles that are advocated by the friends of truth.

PATERSON FREE READING SOCIETY.

As the "Paterson Free Reading Society" intend to meet, in future, on the first day of every week, for the purposes originally contemplated by its formation, it may not be improper, on this occasion, to give some explanation of its views, objects, and principles.

Some may think it singular, that we call ourselves, in this country of universal freedom, a "Free Reading Society." The fact, however, is, although we may read what works we please, we cannot always obtain such works as please us. Our libraries contain but few scientific and philosophical works of established character; and so great is the influence of fanaticism, that every publication which is supposed to militate against religion, however useful, is proscribed, or consigned to the flames, by its narrow minded votaries; while society is inundated with tracts, and other devotional productions, calculated to mystify and debase the mind. To remedy this evil, has been one of the principle objects of our union. Already we are in possession of several valuable works which were beyond the reach of individuals; and, as our means increase, others will be added to the number. Another primary object of this institution is the establishment of regular and public lectures on every subject conducive to the happiness of man. Although the errors of theology, that source of all the misery with which humanity is afflicted, will be the principal object of our animadversions, science and general literature will occupy a considerable share of our attention. Aware that "knowledge is power," and that tyranny of every description exists only where ignorance predominates, it is our determined purpose to make every effort to diffuse liberal principles, and thus emancipate the human mind from mental slavery; for although in this country we justly boast of possessing more political liberty than any other people on the earth, it is a melancholy and undeniable fact, that superstition has erected an empire

here more extended and fatal than in those countries where religion is established, and protected by civil power.

The education of children, agreeably to the most approved and most rational systems, is also intended to be effected by this Association. In New York, a school of practical education has been established, where the pupils are taught, on moderate terms, knowledge of every kind; not mere sounds and signs, called words, but by presenting to them, as far as practicable, the objects themselves; by accustoming them to observe and to think, in tracing the analogy and difference between realities; to acquire the habit of analysing and arranging every thing on sight; and, by cultivating their judgment, render them less liable to be duped by the designing, and necessarily to improve their memory. In this institution, the utmost care is taken to form the temper and moral character of the children, and to render them industrious and useful, by making them practically acquainted with agriculture, mechanics, manufactures, commerce, and domestic and political economy. It is our intention to introduce a similar mode of instruction, whenever our funds will justify the attempt. Meanwhile, we shall do all in our power, to form the minds of our offspring on those principles which we consider best adapted to make them useful members of society, and to promote their own happiness.

In endeavoring to accomplish these important objects, we have laid it down as an invariable rule never to employ invective against those who may differ from us in opinion. Ours is not an Association that professes to speak peace, while it employs the dagger. Satisfied that we have truth on our side, we require no other auxiliary but the faculty of reason, which all enjoy, and are capable of exercising. We are more desirous of rearing a fabric possessing in itself attractions sufficiently powerful to engage attention, than in entering the arena of disputation; fully persuaded that the only force requisite to dissipate error is the force of truth, and that the only way to accomplish this is by a united persevering effort to render the knowledge of truth universal.

The advantages to be derived from becoming a member of this society must be obvious to every person who is at all acquainted with the measures pursued by the enemies of truth to prevent a disclosure of the unprincipled means by which they continue to injure, and, frequently, to ruin, its most strenuous champions. Unable to carry their base designs into effect by unjust and arbitrary laws, and sufficiently aware that their dogmas cannot stand the test of argument, they resort to secret means to destroy their opponents. They use the influence which they have obtained in families, to sow the seeds of detraction, and, assassin like, to strike the dagger into the heart of their victim at the very moment when they know he has not the power or the means of defending himself. But, once a member of this Association, he will have the power as well as the means of counteracting these machinations. United with those possessing moral courage like himself, and confident in the justice of his cause, he will fearlessly advocate the truth, in spite of all opposition, and with the certainty that it must ultimately prevail over superstition, fraud, and priestcraft.

Sunday.—We rejoice to find that the law of this state *compelling* the observance of the Sabbath, or Sunday, has been repealed. It was arbi-

trary, unjust, and unconstitutional. As a *civil* regulation, we consider a day of relaxation from labor or business as highly expedient; but whenever the observance of that day is made an engine, as it has hitherto been, in the hands of an arrogant priesthood to control the human mind, it becomes injurious to society. We have good reasons for believing that the salutary repeal of the obnoxious law was effected by a pamphlet entitled "*The People's Rights Reclaimed*," from the pen of one of our most respectable and intelligent citizens; in which the unconstitutionality of the law is demonstrated beyond even the possibility of cavil. Fanaticism, as is usual in all cases where a beneficial reform is introduced, has opened the floodgates of abuse against the revisers of the law, for recommending the alteration. But let them rail on. The time is past when the anathemas of churchmen intimidated legislators. A ray of light has burst forth too refulgent to be extinguished, or even impeded, by the efforts of bigots. When the mind is bent on acquiring knowledge, nothing can restrain its energies. It never can stop until all its inquiries are satisfied; nor is it possible for it to retrograde. We live in too enlightened an age to fear either the denunciations or the influence of a hireling and corrupt priesthood.

Joint Stock Book Company.—It has been suggested by those friendly to the establishment of this association, that, instead of publishing a prospectus of the plan, a meeting should be called, and a committee at once appointed, to form the necessary rules and regulations. All, therefore, who feel disposed to become subscribers, are requested, *as early as possible*, to signify their intention to the editor of the *Correspondent*, that means may be taken to carry the plan into effect. The great object contemplated is, the obtaining at the *original cost* such books as have been written with a view to human improvement, and that cannot be obtained but at a price beyond the means of individuals. As the company can proceed with a sum of money equal to the printing of an edition of a single book, and advantageously use any sum that can be accumulated, it is not necessary to fix on any capital. It is proposed to make the shares ten dollars each.

Defaulters.—We are almost ashamed to state, that a great proportion of our subscribers are in arrear of the current half year's subscription for our paper. They cannot but be aware, that the existence of the *Correspondent* depends entirely on the *prompt* aid of the friends of liberal principles, and that, where this is withheld, it bespeaks a lukewarmness in the cause utterly unworthy of its adherents. No professions of support can be considered sincere unless followed by corresponding actions; and it cannot be expected of us to continue furnishing our paper, when those who receive it do not comply with the conditions on which it is published.

Morning Lecture.—The Secretary of the *Free Press Association* will deliver a Lecture on Sunday the 21st instant in the Military Hall, Sixth Avenue, Greenwich, at 10 o'clock A. M. The Lecture in the Temple of Arts, William street, at half past 2 o'clock, as usual.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Origin of Fables.—Is it not very natural, that all the various metamorphoses with which the earth may be said to be covered, should have led the orientals, whose imagination is so luxuriant, to imagine that our souls passed from one body to another? An almost imperceptible point grows to be a worm, and this worm becomes a butterfly; an acorn changes to an oak, an egg to a bird; water becomes clouds and thunder; wood is turned into fire and ashes: in a word, all Nature is more or less metamorphosis. Souls being accounted tenous forms, were soon concluded to partake of that property, which was sensibly seen in more dense and heavy bodies. The metempsychosis is, perhaps, the most ancient doctrine in the known world, and still prevails in a great part of India and China. It is likewise very natural that those ancient fables collected and embellished by Ovid, in his admirable work, took their rise from the several metamorphoses with which our eyes are conversant. The very Jews have not been without their metamorphoses. If Niobe was changed into marble, Hedith, Lot's wife, was turned into salt. As Eurydice was detained in hell for looking back, a like indiscretion cost Lot's wife her human nature. The country town in Phrygia, where lived the hospitable Baucis and Philemon, is changed into a lake; the same submersion has befallen Sodom. Arius's daughters turned water into oil; the scripture mentions a change something similar. Cadmus was turned into a serpent, and the like was seen in Aaron's rod. The pagan deities very often assumed a human disguise; and when angels appeared to the Jews, it was always as men; with Abraham they partook of a repast. St. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, says that the messenger of Satan cuffed him.

Church.—There are various kinds of churches; for instance, the Greek church, the protestant church, the church of Geneva, and the Lutheran church. Figuratively it implies that mixed multitude of bishops, deans, canons, prebendaries, and priests, who, under the protection of the state, fare sumptuously of the good things of this world, and expatiate to others on the joys of the next. *Church*, in a corporeal sense, is a large stone or brick building, usually in the form of a cross, with a steeple and weathercock, where poor people and others assemble weekly to receive spiritual instruction.

The church was throughout Europe, in former times, the scene of the most striking events, and the mart of all the passions: there, misery took refuge, and crime found asylum; there, vengeance raised her dagger even at the altar's steps, and love spread its wiles amidst shrines and crucifixes. It was in the church of Canterbury that Thomas a Becket was murdered: it was in the church of Boun Convento that the emperor Henry VII. was poisoned in the *Eucharist*: it was in the Duomo of Florence that the Pazzi, urged by the public and private wrongs, aimed at the lives of the two Medici, and destroyed the feeblest: it was in the church of St. Clair, at Avignon, that Petrarch first fell a victim to Laura's charms, and

that his imagination imbibed the colors of her drapery, until his eyes saw every object tinged with the "green and violet," (*"Negliocchi ho pur le violette e il verde:"*) it was in the church of St. Lorenza, at Naples, that Bocaccio first beheld his beautiful Fiammetta gliding along in her sacred dress of penitence, on the morning of a Holy Saturday, and had his fate decided on the Easter Sunday, when he beheld her at "*la grande festa*," all radiant in vestment as in beauty: it was in the church that the *Betsy Thoughtlesses*, and the *Harriets*, and *Clarissas*, always did most mischief in former days in England; and, according to the "*Spectator*," that all the idleness, vanity, and intrigue of the fashionables of his day were exhibited!

St. Peter's Chair.—The sacrilegious curiosity of the French broke through all obstacles to their seeing the chair of St. Peter. They actually removed its superb casket, and discovered the relic. Upon its mouldering and dusty surface were traced carvings, which bore the appearance of letters. The chair was quickly brought into a better light, the dust and cobwebs removed, and the inscription (for an inscription it was) faithfully copied. The writing was in Arabic characters, and is the well known confession of the Mahometan faith—"There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet." It is supposed that this chair had been, among the spoils of the crusaders, offered to the church at a time when the taste for antiquarian lore, and the decyphering of inscriptions, were not yet in fashion. This story has been since hushed up, the chair replaced, and none but the unhallowed remember the fact, and none but the audacious repeat it. Yet such there are even at Rome!

Removal.—The office of the *Correspondent* is removed to No. 15 Chamber street, near the Apprentices' Library, where all orders and communications are requested to be forwarded.

Printing in all its branches, also *Bookbinding*, neatly and expeditiously executed on the most reasonable terms.

The following publications may be had as above:

Ecce Homo! or a Critical Inquiry into the History of Jesus of Nazareth—75 cents in boards. The author of this work was imprisoned two years and fined in £200 sterling, by the British government, for publishing it.

The People's Rights Reclaimed; being an Exposition of the unconstitutionality of the Law of the State of New York compelling the observance of a religious Sabbath Day—25 cents.

View of the Metaphysical and Physiological Arguments in favor of Materialism—25 cents.

The Scripture Doctrine of Materialism—25 cents.

Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary, Lond. ed., 2 vols. in one—\$1.25.

* * Orders for books, in every department of literature, punctually attended to.